3 SEO tasks to start 2018 off with a bang



We’re just about three weeks into the new year, and the momentum you establish now can easily set the pace for the rest of your year.

I’d like to help you start 2018 off with a bang by earning three simple wins that will set the stage for further success and growth, not just for this year, but long into the future.

These wins are simple, but that doesn’t mean they’re easy – because while the concepts are not complex, a lot of work will be required to accomplish them.

That may seem like a bad thing, but it’s actually a blessing in disguise because it means that most of your competitors won’t even put in the effort, which will give you a significant advantage over them.

Improve page speed to improve ranking

Google just recently announced that beginning in July 2018, mobile page speed will be a ranking factor for its mobile search results. Page speed also has a significant impact on user experience, and several aspects of user experience are direct ranking factors, too.

Studies show that the faster a web page loads, the longer visitors will remain, and in most cases, more of them will convert to paying customers compared to visitors on slower websites.

Most people have a tremendous opportunity for improvement in this area because they don't realize how poorly their website is performing. I was recently talking with a potential client about SEO for his website, and when the topic of page speed came up, he proudly insisted that his website "loads super fast – usually in under one or two seconds!"

If that were true, it would have been phenomenal; however, it was actually closer to thirty seconds, according to the tests I performed using several different tools.

It's important to point out that when I talk about page speed, I'm not specifically talking about Google's PageSpeed Insights. I'm talking about how long it takes a web page to load in general.

Some ways you can improve page speed include:

- investing in high-performance web hosting.
- reducing http calls by merging CSS and JavaScript files, eliminating WordPress plugins and using sprites.
- properly scaling and compressing images.
- implementing server caching, browser caching and Gzip compression.
- minifying CSS and JavaScript files.

Leverage a personal brand for link building

If you've managed a website for any length of time, you've most likely been on the receiving end of a lot of link requests, and I think it's a safe bet that most of them were probably terrible. Now I'm going to say something that might hurt your feelings: If you've *sent* a link request, it was probably terrible, too.

Cold link outreach is challenging, and you generally don't earn very many links in relation to the number of emails you

send out. This is because you're asking for something from a stranger before you've built any rapport, which is an almost certain recipe for disaster. Effective link building depends on relationships, not brute force and volume.



While certainly not the worst link outreach email I've ever seen, this isn't a particularly effective approach.

Rather than cold link outreach, a more effective strategy is to develop a personal brand *that others want to connect with*. This is easier said than done because it will require a tremendous amount of work, performed consistently over a relatively long period of time.

However, once you've developed a personal brand, it will be much easier to leverage the kind of relationships you'll then develop, to efficiently build links. In fact, if your personal brand becomes powerful enough, often, people will link to your content without you even asking.

A few ways you can develop a personal brand include:

- creating consistently branded profiles on key social networks.
- regularly sharing valuable content from others in your industry, along with your insight on it.
- engaging with your audience, both those below and above your stature within your industry.
- regularly publishing amazing content, both on your own website and in industry publications and top-tier business publications like Forbes, Entrepreneur and Fast Company.

Incorporate video into your SEO

efforts

Video is a driving force in digital marketing today, and we're quickly approaching a point where it's just as essential as having a website and social media presence. It can play a significant role in your SEO efforts in two distinct ways.

The first is that video often helps to keep interested visitors on your website longer. Google sees this as a sign of a positive user experience, which has a beneficial impact on your organic ranking. A side benefit here is that you're also giving visitors more of a chance to truly connect with your brand.

The second is that by publishing your videos on YouTube, you have the potential to put your brand in front of a larger audience through YouTube's search results. (YouTube is often referred to as the "second-largest search engine in the world" due to its position as the second-most-visited website globally after Google, according to Alexa rankings.)

On top of that, you're leveraging the authority of YouTube's domain, so you also have the opportunity to get your videos ranked in Google's search results.

I know a lot of you right now are saying, "Whoa, Jeremy! There's no way in hell I'm getting on video!"

Look, I understand that being on video can feel uncomfortable, awkward, and even terrifying, but it doesn't have to be any of those things. Once you start doing video regularly, you'll get used to it, and besides – it's become a necessity, so unless you want to lose ground to competitors, you have to step outside of your comfort zone.

Video expert Holly Gillen of Holly G Studios says, "Video is one of the most powerful tools you have in business today! The race has begun, and if you're not running you are now getting

left behind. At the end of the day, you can have video or you can have excuses, but you can't have both."

Some ways you can incorporate video into your SEO include:

- creating videos that answer questions your prospects have about your products, services and industry, as well as videos that demonstrate who you are and why you do what you do.
- optimizing your videos on YouTube so they'll show up in YouTube's search, in conjunction with that, building relevant, high-quality links to them so that they show up in Google's search results.
- embedding your videos from YouTube on your own website to keep visitors engaged and on your website longer.

Opinions expressed in this article are those of the guest author and not necessarily Search Engine Land. Staff authors are listed here.

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